

detergent surfactant; total electrolyte to provide at least about 0.04 molarity of cations, and toxicologically-acceptable basic buffer to provide a pH of greater than about 8.5, said composition being able to significantly reduce the level of microorganismsⁱⁿ less than one minute, the composition being essentially free of any material that adversely affects safety or palatability, so that said food does not need to be rinsed before consumption.

14. (New) The method of Claim 13 wherein said aqueous dilute treatment composition comprises:

- (a) greater than about 0.015% by weight of toxicologically-acceptable base-stable anionic detergent surfactant;
- (b) toxicologically-acceptable basic buffer selected from the group consisting of water soluble borates, hydroxides, ortho-phosphates, carbonates, and/or bicarbonates, to provide a pH of from about 8.5 to about 13
- (c) sufficient electrolyte to provide at least about 0.04 molarity of cations without considering any surfactant cations;
- (d) optionally, from about 0.0005% to about 3% by weight of calcium ion sequestrant selected from the group consisting of water soluble salts of polyphosphates, organic polycarboxylic acid, and mixtures thereof;
- (e) optionally, toxicologically-acceptable preservative;
- (f) optionally, toxicologically acceptable suds suppresser;
- (g) the balance comprising an aqueous carrier selected from water and, optionally, containing a low level of low molecular weight, toxicologically-acceptable organic solvent.

15. (New) The method of Claim 14 wherein said aqueous treatment composition comprises:

- (a) less than about 5% by weight and sufficient to maintain the viscosity of said solution to less than about 50 centipoise, of toxicologically-acceptable base-stable anionic detergent surfactant;
- (b) toxicologically-acceptable basic buffer selected from the group consisting of water soluble potassium and/or sodium, hydroxides, ortho-phosphates, and/or carbonates, to provide a pH of from about 10.0 to about 12.5;
- (c) sufficient electrolyte to provide at least about 0.08 molarity of cations and

- (d) optionally, from about 0.001% to about 2% by weight said calcium ion sequestrant, which is selected from the group consisting of sodium and/or potassium tripolyphosphate, ethylenediaminetetraacetate, citrate, and mixtures thereof.

16. (New) The method of Claim 14 wherein said aqueous treatment composition comprises:

- (a) less than about 2% by weight and sufficient to maintain the viscosity of said solution to less than about 10 centipoise, of toxicologically-acceptable base-stable sodium and/or potassium alkyl sulfate and/or sulfonate and/or C₈₋₁₄ soap;
- (b) toxicologically-acceptable basic buffer selected from the group consisting of water soluble potassium and/or sodium hydroxides and/or ortho-phosphates and/or carbonates, to provide a pH of from about 10.5 to about 12.3;
- (c) sufficient electrolyte to provide at least about 0.12 molarity of cations and
- (d) optionally, from about 0.01% to about 1% by weight of salt of organic polycarboxylic acid.

17. (New) The method of Claim 13 wherein said aqueous treatment composition comprises:

- (a) less than about 1% by weight and sufficient to maintain the viscosity of said solution to less than about 5 centipoise, of toxicologically-acceptable base-stable sodium and/or potassium C₆₋₁₆ alkyl sulfate and/or C₈₋₁₄ soap; and
- (c) sufficient electrolyte to provide at least about 0.04 molarity of cations.

18. (New) The method of Claim 14 wherein said aqueous treatment composition comprises:

- (a) less than about 1% by weight and sufficient to maintain the viscosity of said solution to less than about 5 centipoise, of toxicologically-acceptable base-stable sodium and/or potassium alkyl sulfate and/or C₈₋₁₄ soap; and
- (c) optionally, from about 0.003% to about 1% by weight of sodium tripolyphosphate and/or sodium ethylenediaminetetraacetate.

19. (New) The method of Claim 13 wherein said treatment composition is made by diluting a concentrated composition with water that may contain microorganisms, the concentrate being used at a level of from about 0.1% to about 5% by weight of the dilute aqueous treatment composition.

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20. (New) An aqueous dilute treatment composition comprising:

- (a) greater than about 0.015% by weight of toxicologically-acceptable base-stable nonionic and/or anionic detergent surfactant;
- (b) toxicologically-acceptable basic buffer selected from the group consisting of water soluble borates, hydroxides, ortho-phosphates, carbonates, and/or bicarbonates, to provide a pH of from about 8.5 to about 13;
- (c) sufficient electrolyte to provide at least about 0.04 molarity of cations;
- (d) optionally, from about 0.0005% to about 3% by weight of calcium ion chelant selected from the group consisting of sodium and/or potassium polyphosphate and/or organic polycarboxylate;
- (e) optionally, toxicologically-acceptable preservative;
- (f) optionally, toxicologically acceptable suds suppresser; and
- (g) the balance comprising an aqueous carrier selected from water and, optionally, containing a low level of low molecular weight, toxicologically-acceptable organic solvent.

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21. (New) The composition of Claim 20 which comprises:

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- (a) less than about 5% by weight and sufficient to maintain the viscosity of said solution to less than about 50 centipoise of toxicologically-acceptable base-stable anionic detergent surfactant;
 - (b) toxicologically-acceptable basic buffer selected from the group consisting of water soluble potassium and/or sodium, hydroxides, ortho-phosphates, and/or carbonates, to provide a pH of from about 10.0 to about 12.5;
 - (c) sufficient electrolyte to provide at least about 0.08 molarity of cations: and
 - (d) optionally, from about 0.001% to about 2% by weight said calcium ion sequestrant.

22. (New) The composition of Claim 21 which comprises:

- (a) less than about 2% by weight and sufficient to maintain the viscosity of said solution to less than about 10 centipoise, of toxicologically-acceptable base-stable sodium and/or potassium C₆₋₁₆ alkyl sulfate and/or sulfonate and/or C₈₋₁₄ soap;

- (b) toxicologically-acceptable basic buffer selected from the group consisting of water soluble potassium and/or sodium hydroxides and/or ortho-phosphates and/or carbonates, to provide a pH of from about 10.5 to about 12.3; and
- (c) sufficient electrolyte to provide at least about 0.12 molarity of cations; and
- (d) optionally, from about 0.01% to about 1% by weight calcium ion sequestrant.

23. (New) The composition of Claim 20 which comprises:

- (a) less than about 1% by weight and sufficient to maintain the viscosity of said solution to less than about 5 centipoise, of toxicologically-acceptable base-stable sodium and/or potassium C₈₋₁₄ alkyl sulfate and/or C₈₋₁₄ soap; and
- (c) optionally, from about 0.003% to about 1% by weight of sodium tripolyphosphate and/or ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid.

24. (New) A concentrated composition suitable for use in preparing dilute compositions for treating food at a basic pH above about 8.5, by diluting with water using from about 0.1% to about 5% of the concentrated composition, by weight of the dilute composition, said concentrated composition comprising:

- (a) from about 0.1% to about 50% by weight of toxicologically-acceptable detergent surfactant;
- (b) toxicologically-acceptable basic buffer, to provide a pH of from about 8.5 to about 13 in said dilute composition, but with low reserve alkalinity in said dilute composition to avoid damage to a human, the level of orthophosphate, when present, being from about 3% to about 60%, by weight of phosphoric acid equivalent;
- (c) sufficient electrolyte to provide at least about 0.04 molarity cations in said dilute composition; and
- (d) optionally, toxicologically-acceptable preservative;
- (e) optionally, toxicologically-acceptable suds suppresser; and
- (f) the balance comprising compatible, toxicologically-acceptable inert and/or minor ingredients.

25. (New) The composition of Claim 24 which is diluted to be from about 0.5% to about 2% by weight of said dilute treatment composition, and sufficient to maintain the viscosity of said dilute treatment composition to less than about 10 centipoise, comprising:

- (a) from about 0.5% to about 25% by weight of toxicologically-acceptable base-stable sodium and/or potassium alkyl sulfate and/or sulfonate and/or C₈₋₁₄ soap;
- (b) as the basic buffer, potassium and/or sodium and/or calcium hydroxide, orthophosphate, carbonate, and/or bicarbonate to have a pH in said dilute treatment composition of from about 10 to about 12.5; and
- (c) sufficient electrolyte to provide at least about 0.08 molarity of cations in said dilute composition; and
- (d) optionally, from about 1% to about 10% by weight of calcium ion sequestrant.

26. (New) The composition of Claim 25 wherein

- (a) said base-stable anionic surfactant is alkyl sulfate and/or C₈₋₁₄ soap;
- (b) said basic buffer provides a pH in said dilute treatment composition of from about 10.5 to about 12.3.

27. (New) A dilute treatment composition prepared by diluting from about 0.5% to about 2% by weight of the composition of Claim 24 with impure water to form a composition which has a viscosity less than about 50 centipoise under shear of greater than about 1000 sec⁻¹.

28. (New) The composition of Claim 24 comprising only GRAS and/or food grade ingredients.

29. (New) The composition of Claim 24 wherein said composition contains an effective amount of toxicologically-acceptable suds suppressor.

30. (New) The composition of Claim 24 wherein said composition is formed using impure water.